

Government to set two-tier pricing for self-paid COVID-19 nucleic acid testing services from tomorrow

The Government announced today (October 27) that the self-paid COVID-19 nucleic acid testing services will be provided at two-tier pricing with express service introduced starting from tomorrow (October 28). Moreover, the self-paid testing services being provided at the 19 community testing centres (CTCs) will be extended to all 85 CTCs and community testing stations (CTSs).

Under the two-tier pricing with reduction in fee and quicker testing services, members of the public who need to obtain a test result report for general community or private purposes (such as certifications for travelling or work) may opt for nucleic acid test services at a more affordable price or with a quicker turnaround time according to their needs. Relevant pricing arrangements include reducing the price cap of "Standard self-paid service" (i.e. test result report to be delivered within 24 hours of specimen collection) from currently \$240 to \$150, as well as adding "Express self-paid service" (i.e. test result report to be delivered within 12 hours of specimen collection with price capped at \$240).

Separately, CTC/CTSs will continue to provide free testing services for specific members of the public such as persons subject to compulsory testing, eligible persons of targeted groups (such as staff of residential care homes (RCHs), airport and cold stores), visitors to public hospitals / RCHs, elderly and persons undergoing voluntary testing. Starting from November 8 (Tuesday), relevant persons who wish to undergo a free test merely need to make online booking or use the Testing Registration QR code in the "LeaveHomeSafe" (LHS) mobile application for registration.

Self-paid test services

Starting from tomorrow, all 85 CTC/CTSs will provide self-paid testing services which are offered in two options, namely "Standard self-paid service" and "Express self-paid service". Users of self-paid testing services can pay by cash or contactless payments (such as Octopus, mobile payment or credit card). Owing to security considerations, CTSs (i.e. testing points located outdoors) will not accept cash. The price of the two options of self-paid testing services are as follows:

- "Standard self-paid service": service price capped at \$150. If the test result is negative, members of the public will receive a PCR test result report issued by the testing agency within 24 hours of specimen collection.
- "Express self-paid service": service price capped at \$240. If the test result is negative, members of the public will receive a PCR test result report issued by the testing agency within 12 hours of specimen collection.

As positive specimens are subject to checking and confirmation, it may

take longer time for the testing agency to issue the test report. Furthermore, contractors can set the service price at a level lower than the capped amount, hence the prices of self-paid services at different CTC/CTSs may vary.

Free testing services

CTC/CTSs will continue to provide free testing services to the following specific members of the public:

1. Persons subject to compulsory testing (such as those residing or working in a residential building which was included in a compulsory testing notice)
2. Eligible persons of targeted groups (such as staff of RCHs, airport and cold stores)
3. Visitors to public hospitals and RCHs
4. Elderly aged 60 or above
5. Persons undergoing voluntary testing

The Government is progressively expanding online booking arrangement for testing services to all 85 CTC/CTSs. Starting November 8 (Tuesday), aforementioned persons who are now eligible for free testing can continue to receive free tests by merely making advance bookings for testing at a testing site and time slot suitable to them through the online booking system (booking.communitytest.gov.hk/form/index.jsp) or using the Testing Registration QR code in the LHS mobile application for registration on site at CTC/CTSs. Persons who are exempted from using the LHS mobile application (such as children aged 15 or below, elderly aged 65 or above, and persons with disabilities) can receive free test at CTC/CTSs even without making booking or using the Testing Registration QR code.

The Testing Registration Code function has been newly added to the LHS mobile application (version 3.4.2 or above) to enable members of the public to fill in registration information in advance for generating a user-designated QR code which can be scanned on site in lieu of manual data input, thereby simplifying the registration process for nucleic acid testing. The use of Testing Registration QR code makes way for a smoother and faster testing process. Feedback from testees has been positive in general. At present, testing centres/stations accord priority to serve individuals who have made advance bookings or use Testing Registration Code and allow them to route through the "green lane" for priority testing. The Government encourages members of the public to obtain Testing Registration Code as early as possible. Staff at CTC/CTSs will continue to provide assistance to testees to help them to obtain the Testing Registration Code for registration on site.

The registration information filled in in advance will only be stored in the user's LHS mobile application and will not be uploaded to other systems. If necessary, members of the public can fill in information and generate Testing Registration Code via the LHS mobile application for persons in need, such as young children or elderly, who do not have a mobile phone / mobile device, and store the screen shot or printout of those Testing Registration Codes accordingly. The relevant persons can present the screen shot or

printout of the Testing Registration Code at the testing point for registration of free tests. A Government spokesman reminded that each user can only store one user-designated Testing Registration Code in his or her LHS mobile application.

To ensure that the registered information is accurate and that the test result can be delivered to the right person, members of the public are still required to bring along the necessary identification documents (such as a valid Hong Kong identity card) and a mobile phone which can receive SMS in Hong Kong for verification by the staff when undergoing nucleic acid testing. The testing services system has been updated such that testees can use local or non-local (including Mainland or overseas places) mobile phone numbers for registration given that those phone numbers can receive SMS within Hong Kong (such as the roaming service is on) with a view to receiving SMS on booking confirmation and notification of test result (The latter is applicable to free testing while the means of notification for self-paid test is subject to the arrangement of individual testing agencies).

The spokesman said, "The Government rolls out a series of enhancement measures with a view to providing ample, high-quality, speedy, accessible and affordable community testing services for the convenience of members of the public. Other enhancement measures include extending and standardising the service hours of CTCs and CTSs, and regularising a number of mobile specimen collection stations to constitute a community testing network within 15 minutes of walking distance from the residence of some 70 per cent of the population. Furthermore, online booking service will be available at all CTC/CTSs later."